

Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research

**Rome
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
9 June 2004**

**Plenary Meeting
Report**

Delegations present:

Member countries: Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States
Absent: Argentina

Liaison countries: Croatia, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia

Observers : Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Switzerland, Ukraine

1 – Applications for Membership

- **Denmark has been accepted as a member of the Task Force.** The Danish delegation is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Danish Institute for International Studies, Department of Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

No representatives have been appointed yet to the Memorials Working Group.

After reviewing the Baseline Study on Holocaust-related activities in Denmark submitted by the Danish delegation, the Plenary has decided that the **Task Force Chair should send a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark** in order to obtain more information and warranties about Denmark's commitment to the 2000 Stockholm Declaration.

Further clarifications will be requested from Denmark at the next Plenary Session.

- **Latvia has been accepted as a member of the Task Force.** The Latvian Liaison Working Group, lead by Sweden, is therefore obsolete, although the Swedish-Latvian cooperation will informally continue within the Task Force.

The Latvian delegation is composed of members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Centre for Judaic Studies at Riga University, and the Association of History Teachers of Latvia.

No representatives have been appointed yet to the Information or the Memorials Working Groups.

After presentation of the Latvian candidacy and after questioning the Latvian representative on issues related to Holocaust education in Latvia, it was decided that a **letter would be sent by the Task Force Chair to the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs** to obtain more information concerning investigations and prosecutions of Nazi criminals in Latvia.

New questions might therefore be submitted to the Latvian delegation on the occasion of the next Plenary Session.

- **Switzerland** has declared its intention to present its candidacy to the Task Force at the next Plenary Session.
- Likewise, **Belgium** is likely to concretize its candidacy (officially presented to the French Chair by a letter from the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 6 September 2002) under Italian Chairmanship.
- **Romania** has repeated its intention to become a full member of the Task Force. A new application might be submitted at the next Plenary meeting.

2 – Reports of the Functional Working Groups

(A full version of the reports will be circulated by the Chairs of the Working Groups over the Internet Listservs.)

Academic Working Group

The main issue raised by the national delegations dealt with the ***International Tracing Service*** (ITS). Despite earlier decisions reached by the Plenary under the former chairmanships, no step was taken by the Task Force to prompt the International Tracing Service to open its archives to researchers.

- It was decided that a press release would be circulated by the Chair in order to support the commitment of the ITS authorities and Commission to open access to the Bad Arolsen archives for scholars and other researchers by the end of the year.

- Moreover, to begin dialogue with the ITS, it was decided that a delegation from Task Force countries would visit Bad Arolsen in July 2004. The United States has proposed to organize the visit.
- Finally, ITS officials will be invited to attend the next Task Force Plenary Meeting to present the progress made in opening the Bad Arolsen archives for historical research.

The Chair of the Academic Working Group has also repeated the importance for the national delegations to be involved in the work of the Group and to designate representatives to participate in the meetings.

Education Working Group (EWG)

The Chair of the EWG reported about the various decisions of the Working Group. Among those, the following were presented to the Plenary:

- Finalization of a document entitled “*How to Teach the Holocaust*” that will be posted on the Web site with the other documents compiled by the EWG and distributed to teachers during the seminars funded by the Task Force. This new document will be translated into the languages of Task Force countries. The translations will be reviewed by the EWG before being posted on the Internet.
- Creation of a subcommittee to draw up more precise guidance for the applicants. New elements will therefore be added to some already existing documents originally compiled by the Task Force Fund Working Group. The revised versions will be submitted to the national delegations over the General Listserv.
- The EWG decided to review project proposals that do not request Task Force financial support. This would help good educational projects to raise more funds.
- The EWG suggested that a financial ceiling be set up for funding projects:
 - A limit of 25,000 U.S. dollars/euros is established, subject to the requested grant not exceeding 50 percent of the total project budget.
 - Projects under 5,000 U.S. dollars/euros can be totally financed by the Task Force Fund.

The Plenary, however, decided, upon recommendation of the Task Force Fund, that these figures would only be a recommended guideline and that grant requests above the established limit could be submitted.

- The EWG Chair insisted that all new members of the Working Group appointed by the national delegations (two per country) should be specialists of Holocaust education in order to improve the efficiency of the group in reviewing and evaluating the projects submitted. A welcome letter describing the role and tasks of EWG members will be circulated to the new representatives.

Task Force Fund Working Group

The Working Group reported on the financial situation of the Task Force. The national delegations did not comment on this.

The Swedish delegation, in charge of managing the Task Force Fund, proposed organizing the audit of several projects supported by the Task Force each year. The costs for the auditing will be met by the Task Force Fund. This proposition was unanimously welcomed by the Plenary.

Memorials Working Group

- The issue presented to the Plenary dealt with the proposal to send a **letter to the German Parliament** on behalf of the Task Force about the CSU/CDU motion 15/3048 concerning the “Funding of Memorials of the History of Dictatorship in Germany” to be debated by the deputies on Friday, 17 June, 2004, at the Bundestag.

The Memorials Working Group experts presented this motion as creating a possible danger of mixing and equating crimes of the Nazi period and crimes perpetrated by the SED regime. It could therefore lead to a minimization of Nazi crimes and a relativization of the Holocaust, and jeopardize Germany’s commitment to the Stockholm Declaration’s principles.

No consensus was reached by the national delegations to send this letter. The main objection raised was that the Task Force could not intervene directly in an ongoing political debate in one of its member countries.

The letter will therefore be sent by NGOs participating in the Task Force and volunteering to sign. No mention of the Task Force will appear in the text and no government would be committed.

The issue of the limits of Task Force public interventions will be put on the agenda of the next Strategic and Implementation Working Group meeting.

- The Dutch delegation presented a Polish-Dutch project about Sobibór including educational activities and a traveling exhibition entitled *From the Ashes of Sobibór*. It was agreed that a Project Proposal Application would be presented to the Task Force in

order to translate the exhibition. If accepted, the exhibition would be presented to the Task Force national delegations at the occasion of the next Plenary Meeting.

Information Working Group

The meeting of the Information Working Group was cancelled. The next one will take place during the second Plenary meeting under Italian Chairmanship.

3 – Special Working Group on Teaching the Holocaust in Multicultural Societies

The Chairs of the Special Working Group (AWG and EWG Chairs) reported on the activities the Task Force could implement to have more of a presence in this field, linked both to Holocaust education and contemporary antisemitism:

- The involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was noted. The Task Force should participate on this issue within the framework of the OSCE. In this regard, it was suggested that a conference be organized within the frame of the OSCE, gathering both teachers and academics.
- A subcommittee composed of five delegates - respectively from Italy (Luigi Clavarino, Ministry of Education), the Netherlands (Karen Polak, Anne Frank House), Poland (Teresa Swiebocka, Auschwitz State Museum), Sweden (Christer Mattson), and the United States - will meet to suggest best practices in this field to the Task Force. The subcommittee is chaired by Karen Polak.

The subcommittee will report at the next Plenary Session.

Moreover, the Israeli delegation suggested that the Chair should invite Father Emil Shofani, head of the Nazareth Catholic Community, to present at the next Plenary meeting on its activities relating to Holocaust education.

4 – Task Force Academic Advisor

The Plenary defined the necessary criteria for locating the next Academic Adviser. She/he must:

- be an academic prominent in the field of Holocaust studies
- be available to travel and attend all Task Force meetings
- have diplomatic skills
- have experience in the domain of Holocaust education
- have language skills

It was decided that the current Academic Adviser would work in partnership with the new appointee at the beginning of the next Chair.

The Chair proposed that the national delegations suggest names that will be reviewed by the Strategic and Implementation Working Group.

A name will therefore be presented at the next Plenary Meeting.

5 – Special Working Group on Vienna Conference

The Austrian delegation presented a project for a Conference entitled *The Memory of the Holocaust: Culture of Remembrance*.

The conference will take place in 2005 at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

It will be financed by the Austrian delegation. Additional funding will be requested from the Task Force. A Project Proposal Application will be presented to the Memorials Working Group.

To organize the conference, a scientific committee has been set up. It will be composed of representatives of Austria, Germany (Juliane Wetzel, Centre for Research on anti-Semitism; Thomas Lutz, Topography of Terror), and Poland (Teresa Swiebocka, Auschwitz State Museum) as well as Yehuda Bauer, Academic Adviser.

6 – Strategic and Implementation Working Group (SIWG)

A list of issues to be raised during the SIWG meeting were suggested to the Chair by the national delegations:

- Limits on Task Force expansion and possible difficulties in reaching consensus in the future
- Organization of a survey on the situation of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research and of archives opening in Task Force member states
- Task Force–OSCE relations
- Structure of the Task Force: status of liaison countries
- Task Force capacities of intervention in member states' Holocaust-related policy

An agenda will be circulated over the General Listserv to all delegates. The next SIWG meeting should take place in Rome in October 2004.

7 – Miscellaneous

- The Ukraine Working Group, although still informal and without official participation of Ukraine representatives, will be presided over by the delegations of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

- The United Kingdom delegation suggested to the Chair and the Information Working Group ways of improving the external communication of the Task Force, which is still poorly known by many organizations working on Holocaust education, and to publicize its achievements:
 - Creation of a short brochure in a journalistic style
 - Professional annual report circulated to a wide range of audiences

The Task Force Chair will make concrete suggestions on how to develop a more elaborated “style guide” for the Task Force.